

Category #32:

The Guidelines should require the use of cleaning products and processes that reduce asthma triggers.

State Response:

OGS agrees that exposures in schools to chemicals and other factors that may cause the development of new cases of asthma (asthmagens) or that may aggravate symptoms of existing asthma (asthma triggers) should be reduced to the greatest extent practical. Asthma is one of the leading causes of absenteeism in schools due to illness, making management of asthma an important concern for school staff, students, and parents (National Asthma Education and Prevention Program, 2003 and US EPA, 2000). Expanding implementation of effective school asthma management programs is a priority in the New York State Asthma Plan 2006-2011. An important component of school asthma management programs is controlling indoor exposures to asthmagens and asthma triggers. Limiting product VOC content as defined in the Guidelines and minimizing the use of products containing added non-functional fragrance ingredients as a recommended best cleaning management practice are two elements of the Guidelines that help accomplish that goal.

One comment suggested identifying prohibited asthmagens based on a list maintained by the Association of Occupational and Environmental Clinics (AOEC). The AOEC has an exposure coding system used in several asthma surveillance programs for tracking development of occupational asthma cases. The coding system flags some chemicals as “asthmagens”, but, according to AOEC, the exposure coding system was not intended for use in formulating products.

“The exposure code system is a tool to help our clinicians. Because AOEC is a non-profit organization dedicated to public health, we allow anyone who wishes to use our system. It is not an official document of any governmental agency nor is it intended to be considered the final authority. It is an AOEC tool to help clinicians be more consistent in reporting.”

<http://www.aoec.org/tools.htm>

Several other lists of occupational asthmagens exist (e.g., UK Health and Safety Executive, Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, Haz-Map, Asmapro), but their usefulness for improving the OGS Guidelines needs to be evaluated. OGS will support a review and revision of these criteria to see if asthmagens and asthma triggers can be further restricted while still allowing for reasonable variety and innovation in the market.

References

NAEPP (National Asthma Education and Prevention Program). 2003. Managing Asthma, A Guide for Schools. NIH Pub. No. 02-2650. Available online at: http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/prof/lung/asthma/asth_sch.pdf

US EPA (United States Environmental Protection Agency). 2000. IAQ Tools for Schools. Managing Asthma in the School Environment. EPA 402-K-00-003. Available online at: http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/asthma/10ways_asthma.pdf

Web Links:

Asmapro:

<http://www.remcomp.fr/asmanet/asmapro/agents.htm>

Association of Occupational & Environmental Clinics.

<http://www.aoec.org/tools.htm>

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety:

<http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/diseases/asthma.html>

Haz-Map:

<http://www.haz-map.com/OA.htm>

UK Health and Safety Executive:

www.hse.gov.uk/asthma/asthmagen.pdf

Frequently Asked Public Comment:

Asthma Triggers

--Believes that while the OGS draft guidelines are a good start in many respects, the requirements for "green" cleaning products are based on an outdated standard which was designed for adults working in office buildings and factories, not for children in classrooms: the GS-37 Standard for Industrial and Institutional Cleaners. This standard permits the use of fragrances and endocrine disrupting chemicals in products with high VOC levels - products known to trigger asthma attacks and are suspected of interfering with normal development. These products have no place in school classrooms. Effective and economical alternatives are currently available which do not contain these ingredients. Please formulate more rigid guidelines as products already exist that can meet greater standards economically.

(Alex Gertner, Highschool Student with Asthma, Scarsdale, NY)

--I live and work in Syracuse, in a school-based health center. I personally have had reaction to the cleaning products that have been used in the schools and so have some of the students, especially those with asthma or any lung problems. I'm sure that the cost of and "green" products will be worth the change and should be done as soon as possible. Thank you.

(Judy Morgillo, Dental Hygienist, Syracuse, NY, Has Asthma and Lung Problems, Works in School Based Health Center)

--I am the Director of a nursery program in NYC. I am concerned about the number of children with asthma. I urge that any products that are used in schools be free of cleaning agents that trigger attacks. Please consider this in your guidelines. Thank you for your attention to this matter. (Kathy Kigel, Director, Preschool Division, Philosophy Day School)

--I am writing urge that the new standards for school cleaning products contain the following recommendations: no non-functional fragrances, no endocrine disrupters, and VOC of 1% or lower, to be reviewed in 2 years as lower VOC products become available on the market. I worked with the Scarsdale Union Free School District to help them develop guidelines for the products used to clean the schools. We have been successful with products that meet the standards I suggest. Fragrances and VOC emissions from cleaning products can affect asthma and allergies in sensitive individuals and endocrine disrupters can cause serious hormone problems, especially in young people. Please think of the children, not the chemical industry, when you adopt your regulations. (Deborah Porder, Scarsdale, NY)